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UNIVERSAL CONGRESS ON THE PANAMA CANAL

QUESTION OF EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION ON AND INCREASE IN THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND RELATED MATTERS

MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS

SECTORAL POLICY QUESTIONS

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Letter dated 28 August 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As Coordinator of the States members of the Rio Group, I have the honour to submit herewith the following declarations of the Eleventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, held in Asunción, Paraguay, on 23 and 24 August 1997:

- Asunción Declaration (annex I);

- Declaration on the Strengthening of the United Nations and the Reform of the Security Council (annex II);

- Declaration on the Defence of Democracy (annex III);

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- Declaration on Unilateral Measures (annex IV).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly under items 28, 59, 95, 96, 98, 104, 112, 146 and 152.

(Signed) B. Hugo SAGUIER CABALLERO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex I

Asunción Declaration, signed at the Eleventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, held in Asunción on 23 and 24 August 1997

Shared principles and values

1. We, the heads of State and Government of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action - the Rio Group, meeting in the city of Asunción, Paraguay, on 23 and 24 August 1997, reaffirm the principles, objectives and values shared by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, which are aimed at ensuring peace and the common welfare, defending representative democracy and developing a joint strategy on the basis of cooperation and integration to improve the living conditions of our people in a context of respect for the sovereignty, self-determination and juridical equality of States.

2. Meeting again on the basis of these principles and objectives, we reaffirm our appreciation for the Rio Group's valuable support of regional integration, unity and solidarity, and we therefore renew the commitment and reaffirm the willingness of our Governments to strengthen the Rio Group as the most representative mechanism for consultation and concerted political action in the region, and an acknowledged representative of Latin America and the Caribbean in relations with other regions and countries.

3. On this occasion, we note with satisfaction the progressive fulfilment of the commitments made since the creation of the Mechanism, especially in promoting and coordinating actions to defend, strengthen and consolidate democracy in our region.

Challenges to the consolidation of democracy

4. As leaders who are committed to the full and unrestricted validity of institutions and the rule of law, we must promote initiatives that enable us to meet the current challenges and thereby effectively foster ethical values and democratic principles in society.

5. We agree that it is essential to encourage effective and responsible participation by citizens in public life, help strengthen political parties and promote civic organizations and their contribution to the discussion of issues of public interest, bearing in mind the diversity among them, on the basis of respect and pluralism. In this context, we consider it necessary to guide the efforts of citizens and authorities jointly to reach higher levels of transparency in public management, respect for democratic institutions and effective social participation.

6. We confirm our commitment to fight drug trafficking and related crimes, together with terrorism and corruption, which are scourges that threaten democratic stability and public safety, and our determination to promote and guarantee the full exercise of fundamental human rights.

7. We therefore undertake to continue to work together to prevent such crimes by constantly improving our national laws and judicial institutions, with special emphasis on prevention through education.

Education for democracy and guidelines for action

8. We are convinced that a renewed effort to promote complete, integrated and democracy-based education in Latin America and the Caribbean in a context of growing interdependence, technological development and globalization will help strengthen democratic civic culture on the basis of the full and effective enjoyment of human rights. We also express our support for values such as tolerance, solidarity, equity and respect for the diversity and cultural identity of our peoples, which will enable us to defend and consolidate democratic governance as a factor in the development and socialization of values, as a promoter of mobility and the social advancement of individuals and, finally, as an essential means of achieving cohesion and socio-cultural integration.

9. The Declarations of Bariloche and Viña del Mar, issued by the Fifth and Sixth Ibero-American Summits, respectively, are of special importance in this regard.

10. In this context, and in order to give greater impetus to democratic civic culture, we have agreed to adopt the following measures:

(a) To incorporate in national educational curricula the kind of objectives and content that will develop democratic culture at all levels, in order to bring up ethical individuals whose behaviour is characterized by solidarity and integrity. Therefore, the participation of teachers, families and students in designing and implementing curricula for the education of democratic citizens should be encouraged.

(b) To instruct the competent ministers to identify possible sources of cooperation, both regional and international, in the field of education for democracy. Consequently, special attention should be given to strengthening the dynamics of cooperation and sharing of existing experience in this area, as a basic factor in the full consolidation and deepening of democracy. In addition, suitable mechanisms will be established for implementing programmes aimed at improving training and encouraging exchanges among the youth and youth organizations in the region.

(c) To strengthen and expand the teaching of history, focusing it on the knowledge, understanding and unity of peoples, in order to enhance political culture, intercultural awareness and self-identity.

(d) To promote, within their fields of competence, the active participation of the mass media and media professionals in the region, in order to strengthen democratic civic culture by setting up new forms of cooperation and exchanges of experience.

(e) To formulate a joint proposal on education for democracy, with a view to the Second Hemispheric Summit, to be held in Chile in April 1998, where

education will be one of the main agenda items. We also hope that the thinking of the Rio Group in this field will be of use in the discussions on the ethical values of democracy at the Seventh Ibero-American Summit, to be held in Venezuela.

Trade, development and integration

11. We reaffirm our belief that a sustained process of economic and social development is fundamental to democratic stability and will enable us to improve living conditions for our people. We also believe that trade is a basic element in the development of our people, which has benefited from the economic reforms implemented in the region; these reforms should be accompanied by policies designed to enable people to have a greater share in the fruits of economic growth.

12. We renew our commitment to achieving the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles, the Plan of Action and the agreements of the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development, held in December 1996 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, which represent an important hemisphere-wide contribution to the management of national and international efforts in this field, since they deal comprehensively with economic, social and environmental objectives. We therefore call on agencies, organizations and international financial institutions to continue to help promote the development of our countries.

13. We also draw attention to the programme adopted at the nineteenth special session of the United Nations to promote Agenda 21 of the Earth Summit, whose purpose is to avoid a setback in the fulfilment of the international community's commitment to sustainable development.

14. We agree with the principles of open regionalism in the framework of a free, non-discriminatory and transparent multilateral trade system, which favours the incorporation of our economies into the international economic system. In this context, we call on the countries members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to abide by the Uruguay Round agreements of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, so as to improve the operation of the multilateral trade system and thereby facilitate trade flows between our region and other countries.

15. We value the bilateral and subregional integration and free-trade processes that have been evolving in Latin America and the Caribbean. The progress made by the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Andean Community, the Group of Three, the Central American Common Market, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and other integration schemes is stimulating further development of free trade in the context of open regionalism.

16. We reaffirm our commitment to conclude negotiations on establishing a free-trade area of the Americas by the year 2005. To this end, we support the opening of negotiations at the Second Summit of the Americas, to be held in Santiago, Chile, in April 1998. We also agree to design a joint regional strategy in the next few months, in the framework of efforts towards a free-trade area, in order to ensure the success of the Santiago summit meeting.

17. We recognize the importance of protecting workers' rights and of the relationship between trade and the environment. However, we feel that these issues should be dealt with exclusively in the corresponding multilateral forums, namely, the International Labour Organization for labour-related matters and the Committee on Trade and Environment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) for environmental matters and international trade, as decided at the WTO meeting in Singapore in November 1996.

18. We consider it necessary to create suitable conditions for encouraging investment in the most depressed areas of the region, thereby promoting growth that is linked to human development.

19. We reiterate our satisfaction at the progress made with regard to integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, noting that integration should be regarded not only as a tool for promoting trade but also as a process for enhancing the harmonious development of the region as a whole, which will benefit all levels of society.

Summit of heads of State and Government of Latin American and the Caribbean and of the European Union

20. We confirm that the political dialogue between the Latin American and Caribbean region and the European Union for the past few years has helped lead to a better relationship between them and the creation of new cooperation mechanisms.

21. We also welcome the initiative of convening a summit meeting between the heads of State and Government of the countries of the European Union and those of our region. If this idea comes to fruition, it will represent a qualitative advance in the deepening of our bi-regional relations; joint preparation will therefore be required in order to define objectives and an agenda.

22. We renew our commitment to participate in the Seventh Ibero-American Summit, convened by Venezuela, to be held on 8 and 9 November 1997, in the belief that the debate on the ethical values of democracy will offer a significant opportunity to deepen and strengthen democracy in our countries.

Second hemispheric summit meeting

23. We attach great importance to the holding of the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Americas, to be held on 18 and 19 April 1998 in Santiago, Chile, for we are certain that this meeting will further the achievement of definite, concrete progress towards cooperation and integration in the Americas.

24. We express our commitment to this valuable initiative, which is designed to strengthen hemisphere-wide dialogue and consultation, and we note the importance of the concerted efforts of the Rio Group in helping to ensure the success of this meeting.

Universal Congress on the Panama Canal

25. We reaffirm the importance of the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal, to be held from 7 to 10 September 1997 as a forum open to the entire international community; this meeting should serve as a consultation mechanism for specifically examining the role which the Canal should play in the twenty-first century and the plans for expanding its services which the Government of Panama is promoting through the Board of Directors of the Panama Canal Authority. We also express our belief that the results of the Congress will contribute to the growth of world trade and to economic growth within the region and will promote international cooperation on the basis of the principle that the Interoceanic Panama Canal will be open, on an equal and strictly neutral basis, to all the world's users and economies.

Reform of the United Nations

26. We recognize the importance of undertaking an institutional reform of the United Nations to ensure that its organs and working methods reflect the new realities of the international community and the appropriate role of Latin America and the Caribbean in the Organization.

Unilateral measures

27. We reiterate our firm rejection of the unilateral and extraterritorial application of national laws as being a violation of national sovereignty, a fundamental principle of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations. Measures of this type have a harmful impact on international relations, trade, investment and cooperation.

28. We instruct our ministers and representatives to continue to work jointly with respect to unilateral actions, focusing special attention on following up the progress made in this matter.

Illicit drug trafficking and related crimes

29. We reaffirm that the fight against drug trafficking requires a comprehensive approach and concerted action throughout the hemisphere, supported by international cooperation, in a context of shared responsibility among all the countries of the region. The fight against this scourge and related crimes should be carried on in accordance with full respect for the laws of each country and on the basis of international conventions on the subject. Accordingly, we welcome the signing of a hemisphere-wide strategy to combat drug trafficking, through which the countries of the Americas have agreed to take specific measures to deal with this problem.

30. We express our concern that drug use and abuse have increased significantly throughout the world. We therefore believe a study of anti-drug strategies should be made in the context of the prevailing international instruments on the subject, using a comprehensive approach and placing special emphasis on demand-control programmes.

31. We also note with concern the increase in the manufacture and consumption of synthetic drugs, a phenomenon that deserves greater attention on the part of the intentional community.

32. We express our satisfaction at the work being done by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Drugs, which should continue its work until it has defined a joint position to be taken by the members of the Rio Group at the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on strengthening international cooperation on drug control, to be held in 1998. We believe that this Group should focus its attention on defining specific proposals and concrete actions to reduce the illicit demand for drugs in all countries, promote alternative crop-development programmes and devise formulas to combat money-laundering, illicit arms trafficking and the diversion of chemical precursors for illicit purposes.

33. We again stress the need to increase resources from bilateral and multilateral sources to finance alternative development programmes and projects, including in them the social and economic aspects of drug trafficking, in order to meet the needs of the communities involved in the growing of illicit crops.

Terrorism

34. We reaffirm the Group's position, and that of the 1996 Inter-American Specialized Conference on Terrorism, that terrorist acts are serious common offenses and a systematic and deliberate violation of individual rights.

35. We also recall the communiqué of 23 April 1997 from the Rio Group, which expresses our satisfaction at the release of the hostages in Lima, Peru.

36. In addition, we welcome the humanitarian efforts of the Government of Colombia, which culminated in the release of 70 Colombian soldiers by the guerilla group.

37. We undertake to strengthen the legal and political framework and to develop judicial cooperation mechanisms among our countries for the purpose of fighting terrorism more effectively.

Cooperation in efforts against corruption

38. We express our satisfaction at the entry into force of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, which is the first international instrument designed to combat this offence through cooperation mechanisms that help defend our democratic institutions, and we reaffirm our political will to continue seeking further arrangements to keep up the fight against this scourge.

39. In this context, we underline the importance of the Eighth International Conference against Corruption, to be held in Lima from 7 to 11 September 1997.

International confidence-building and security

40. Determined to continue to make headway in consolidating the region as an area free of anti-personnel mines, we have agreed to participate actively in the Ottawa process for the prohibition of anti-personnel mines, and we undertake to

work together to make our region the first region free of weapons of this type in the world.

41. We consider that Latin America and the Caribbean have an important role to play in the full and effective enforcement of the instruments regulating the possession, manufacture and transfer of weapons of mass destruction, and we reiterate our firm determine to keep our region free of weapons of this type, and of arms races.

42. We express our commitment to implement consultation and confidence-building measures, bearing in mind the need to strengthen political dialogue and cooperation in order to create conditions of greater transparency, stability and security, including a consultation process on the limitation and control of conventional weapons, as recognized in the Santiago Declaration on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, adopted in November 1995.

43. We express our support for the goal of successfully concluding the present negotiations on a convention against the manufacture and illicit traffic in firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related matériel, so that this relevant inter-American instrument may be opened for signature in 1997 as a substantial commitment by all the countries of the Americas to fight organized crime, terrorism and violence, and we therefore hope it will come into force as soon as possible.

Migrant workers

44. We draw attention to the responsibility of countries of origin and host countries to strengthen cooperation on migrant workers. Accordingly, we urge the adoption of measures to ensure the full exercise of their human rights and their social and economic well-being.

45. We express our deep concern at the growing manifestations of racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination and inhuman or degrading treatment to which migrant workers in some countries are subjected, and we therefore agree that there is a need to promote agreements to ensure respect for human rights and the dignity of all individuals.

46. We draw attention to the initiatives now being taken on this matter by the United Nations through resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights and by the Organization of American States, and to any bilateral instruments that the States involved may establish.

The new international human order

47. We have exchanged views on the call for a new international human order on the basis of human-centred development, and we recognize that the concept places the well-being and social equity of peoples at the core of development, both nationally and internationally.

48. We take note of the CARICOM initiative aimed at the establishment of a regional integration fund in the context of negotiations on the proposed free-trade area of the Americas, as a mechanism to alleviate the problem of

imbalances between the more developed countries and the smaller countries of the hemisphere.

International cooperation on Guatemala

49. The heads of State and Government of the countries members of the Rio Group welcome the fact that the Total Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace in Guatemala, signed on 29 December 1996, is being enforced under the established terms. Accordingly, we call on the international community and the international financial institutions to continue their support for the pacification process in Guatemala, particularly bearing in mind the sectors most affected by the conflict, and finding appropriate formulas to streamline assistance to this country and promote a greater flow of resources.

Tourism

50. We express our satisfaction at the growth of the tourism sector in our economies and its important contribution to the region in terms of employment, investment and integration among its peoples. We therefore support the efforts of the Tourism Commission of South America (COTASUR) to create a joint tourism promotion programme, together with the joint initiatives aimed at developing this important sector throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

51. In view of the importance we attach to the defence of democracy, reform of the United Nations and unilateral measures, we have decided to include a specific declaration on each topic.

52. Our Ministries of Foreig. Affairs shall be responsible for following up the decisions taken by the Rio Group through the secretariat pro tempore and the Troika.

53. We have agreed to hold the Twelfth Summit of Heads of State and Government in Panama City, Republic of Panama, on 4 and 5 September 1998.

54. We, the heads of State and Government meeting at Asunción, wish to express our thanks and congratulations to the President of the Republic of Paraguay, Juan Carlos Wasmosy, to his Government and to the people of Paraguay for their hospitality and for the excellent organization and conduct of the Eleventh Summit of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action.

DONE at Asunción, capital of the Republic of Paraguay, on 24 August 1997, in three original texts in Spanish, Portuguese and English, all texts being equally authentic.

(Signed) Carlos Saúl MENEM
President of Argentina

(Signed) Hugo BÁNZER SUÁREZ
President of Bolivia

(Signed) Fernando Henrique CARDOSO
President of Brazil

(Signed) Eduardo FREI RUIZ-TAGLE
President of Chile

(Signed) Ernesto SAMPER PIZANO
President of Colombia

(Signed) Fabián Ernesto ALARCÓN RIVERA
President of Ecuador

(Signed) Clement ROHEE
Minister for Foreign Affairs
of Guyana

(Signed) José DELMER URBIZO
Minister for Foreign Affairs
of Honduras

(Signed) Ernesto ZEDILLO PONCE de LEÓN
President of Mexico

(Signed) Ernesto PÉREZ BALLADARES
President of Panama

(Signed) Juan Carlos WASMOSY MONTI
President of Paraguay

(Signed) Alberto FUJIMORI FUJIMORI
President of Peru

(Signed) Julio María SANGUINETTI
President of Uruguay

(Signed) Rafael CALDERA
President of Venezuela

Annex II

Declaration on the Strengthening of the United Nations and the reform of the Security Council, adopted on 24 August 1997 by the Eleventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group

We, the heads of State and Government, meeting in Asunción at the Eleventh Summit of the Rio Group, reaffirming the views contained in the Rio de Janeiro Declaration of September 1994 concerning the process of expansion and reform of the United Nations Security Council, declare the following:

1. We reaffirm our full commitment to the principles of multilateralism, in particular the sovereign equality of States and respect for the legal order, as central elements of the United Nations. We stress in this context the need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to meet the new challenges of the international situation. In this respect, we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to propose to the General Assembly a broad reform programme, which was submitted on 16 July 1997. In particular, we support the efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the Secretary-General and the emphasis which is being placed on activities for the promotion of economic and social development.

2. For all these reasons, we feel that the reforms which will have to be carried out constitute a fundamental step in adapting international institutions to the new challenges facing the international community.

3. Also, taking into consideration the importance which has been acquired by the processes of reform of the Organization, we will remain alert to the development of those processes and, to that end, will continue to carry out the appropriate consultations.

4. We reiterate the terms of the Rio de Janeiro Presidential Declaration of 1994, which expressed the great importance we attach to the process of expansion and reform of the United Nations Security Council to correct the imbalances of its current composition, improve the decision-making mechanisms and give greater transparency to the conduct of its work, reflecting all the Members of the Organization in a more legitimate and representative manner.

We also reaffirm that because of its legal tradition and its contribution to the cause of peace, the Latin American and Caribbean region should be considered in any expansion of the Security Council.

5. To that end, we declare that the region should fill the posts assigned to it through a process whose results have not only legal validity but also political legitimacy, offering a real and effective equality of democratic opportunity of access to those posts.

6. We reaffirm that the reform of the Security Council should respect the principles of equitable geographical distribution and the sovereign equality of States.

7. We also declare that a reform resulting from discriminatory treatment between developed and developing countries would be unacceptable.

8. Taking into account the need to observe democratic principles and to surmount the historical circumstances which existed in 1945, we reaffirm that the ideal is to advance towards the total elimination of the veto. As a first step, its use should be strictly limited to the matters covered in Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

9. We stress the importance attached to transparency in the work and decision-making process of the Security Council. We take note with satisfaction of certain recent improvements with regard to its procedures and methods of work. We feel that more public and orientation meetings should be held, for instance on the occasions when the Secretary-General or his special envoys present reports.

In addition, States which are not members should be invited to participate in the Security Council's informal consultations in accordance with the provisions of Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter. We support other measures suggested within the framework of the General Assembly with a view to enhancing the transparency and legitimacy of the actions of the Security Council.

10. We feel that expansion, reform of working methods and the question of the veto form an integral part of the reform of the Security Council and should be part of the same agreement.

11. We reiterate the desire of our Governments to continue to participate actively in the Working Group in order to achieve general agreement.

12. In the light of the foregoing considerations and taking into account the dynamics and political importance of the subject, we have decided to instruct our Ministers for Foreign Affairs to maintain a broad dialogue on the issue, taking into account the regional interest, and to seek an understanding on the subject.

Annex III

Declaration on the Defence of Democracy, adopted on 24 August 1997 by the Eleventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group

1. We, the heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, have conducted an intensive exchange of views on the need to preserve and strengthen representative democracy, the value of which is shared by all its members, and the effective exercise of which constitutes an obligation for its member States.

2. We are convinced that representative democracy is the foundation of the legitimacy of political systems and an essential condition for the peace, stability and development of the region, and for the hemispheric integration process in which our countries are involved.

3. We agree that the elimination of extreme poverty, the achievement of social justice and the promotion of forms of civic participation, as well as the improvement of the living conditions and general well-being of our peoples, are permanent objectives of our countries which may be more easily achieved through cooperation and coordination among democratic Governments.

4. We reiterate that the promotion and observance of ethical values and respect for human rights are the foundation and raison d'être of the legitimacy of political systems, and that only democracy can effectively guarantee that they remain valid.

5. We reaffirm that any attack on the democracy of a country of the region constitutes an assault against the principles which underlie the solidarity of the States of the Americas.

6. Therefore, in the quest for the preservation of representative democracy and the full validity of institutions, we agree that, should circumstances arise in any of the member countries of the Rio Group which disrupt the rule of law or entail a breach of the constitutional order, the secretariat pro tempore will convene a meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs to consider the situation.

Annex IV

Declaration on Unilateral Measures, adopted on 24 August 1997 by the Eleventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group

1. We, the heads of State of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action - the Rio Group - meeting in Asunción, Paraguay, on 23 and 24 August 1997, on the occasion of the Eleventh Summit of the Rio Group, reaffirm our commitment to respect for international law as a norm of conduct of States in their international relations, enshrined as a principle in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Charter of the Organization of American States.

2. We reject once again the unilateral and extraterritorial application of national laws as actions which violate the legal equality of States and the principles of respect for and dignity of national sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, and which threaten coexistence between States. Within the sphere of international relations, these measures adversely affect trade, investment and cooperation. Such measures as the Helms-Burton Act and recent efforts to broaden its scope, assessments of human rights situations, certification processes in combating drug trafficking, environmental criteria and attempts to make cooperation conditional on the voting patterns of countries in international bodies erode the relations of friendship and cooperation among States.

3. We undertake to continue to coordinate our positions on these issues in regional and international forums and to contribute to the work of the United Nations Decade of International Law with the goal of intensifying the analysis of the question of the unilateral and extraterritorial application of national laws, strengthening multilateralism through the application of the international agreements signed by States and guiding the external conduct of our countries on the basis of international law.

4. We confirm our willingness to engage in constructive dialogue in this area and our firm commitment to strengthen multilateral cooperation.